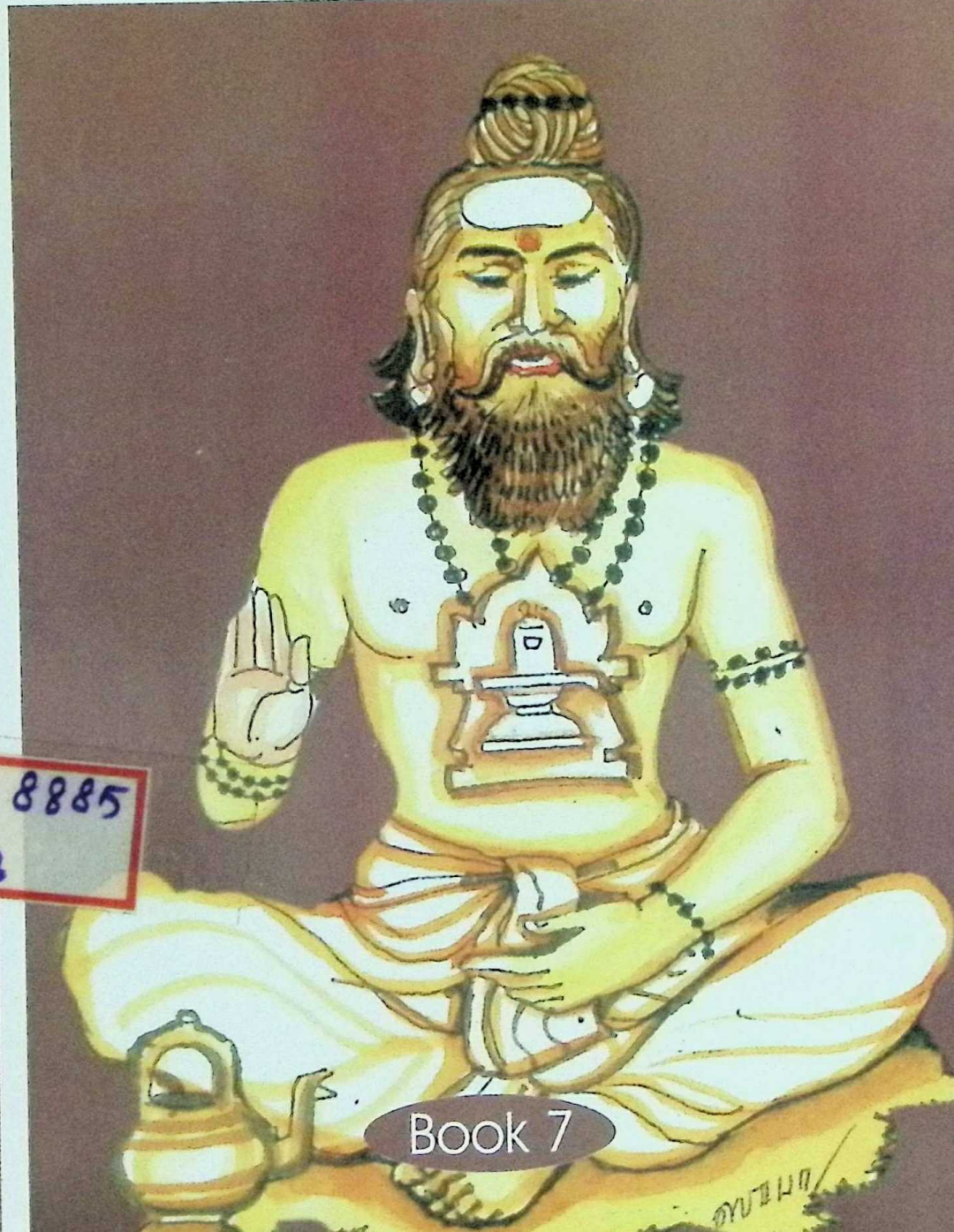


STORIES OF 63 SAINTS OF SOUTH INDIA



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Book 7

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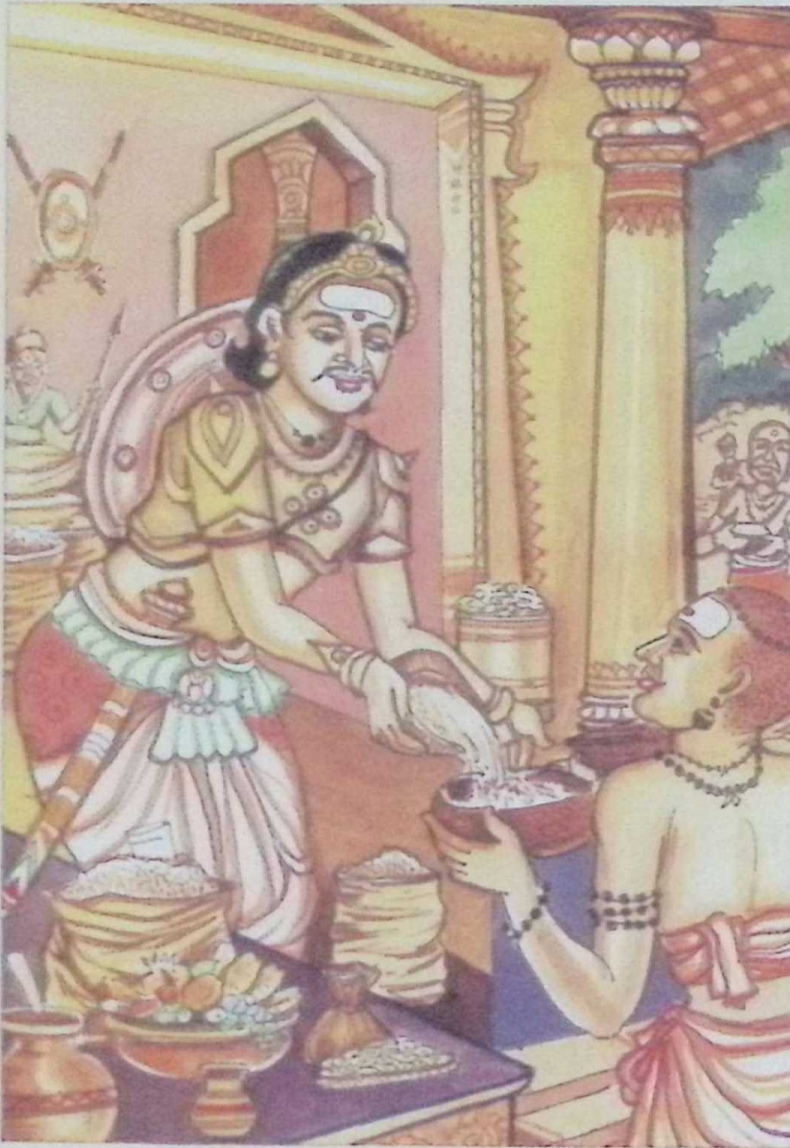
The Stories of this Book

MUNAIADUVAR NAYANAR
KAZHARCHINGA NAYANAR
SERUTHUNAI NAYANAR
IDANKAZHI NAYANAR
PUGAZHTHUNAI NAYANAR
KOTPULI NAYANAR
PUSALAR NAYANAR
MANGAIYARKARASI
NESA NAYANAR
KOCHENGA CHOLAR
NEELAKANTA YAZHPANAR
ISAI GNANIYAR
SADAYA NAYANAR

Book 7



MUNAIADUVAR NAYANAR

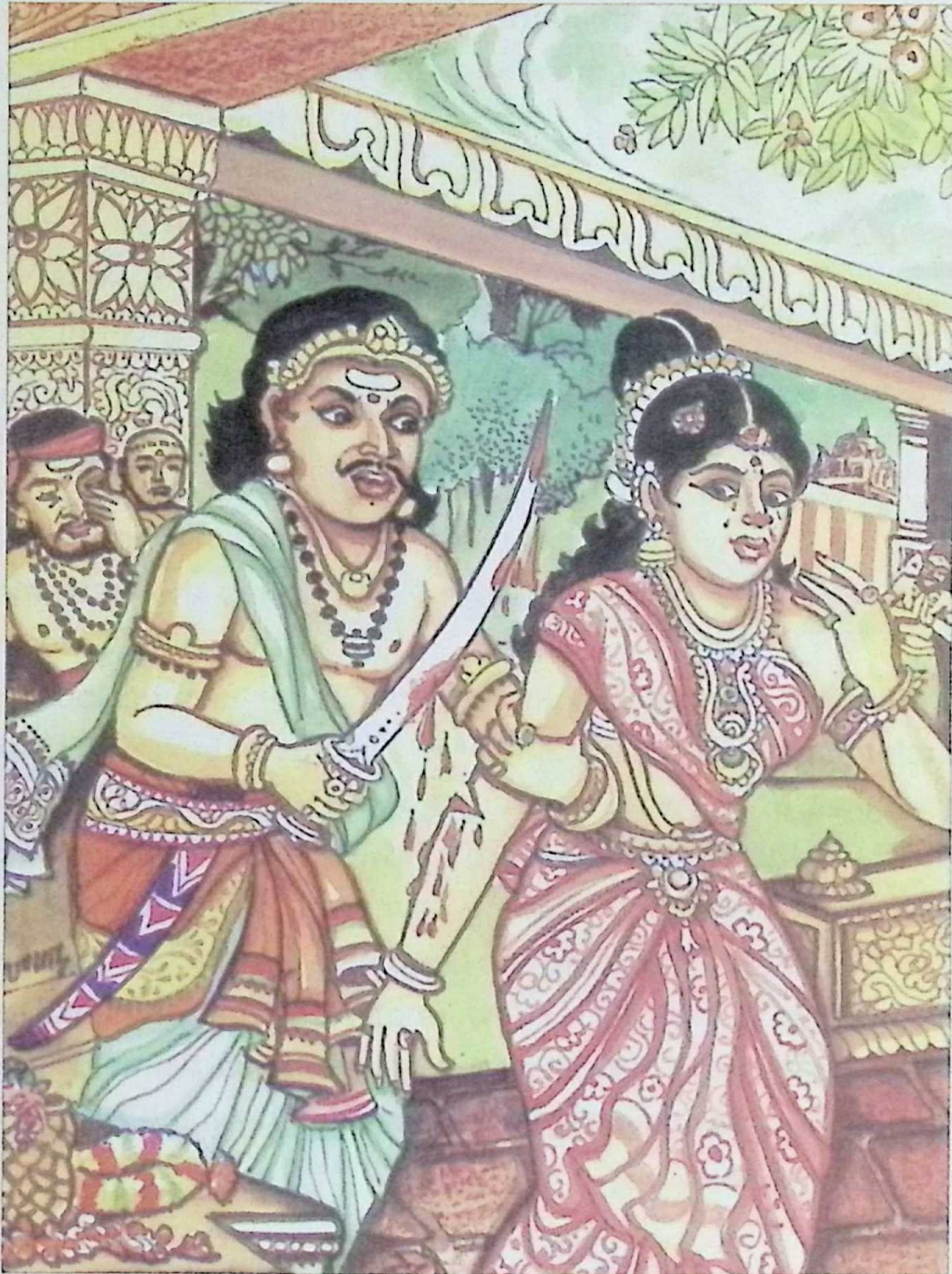


In Nidur people loved and respected Munaiaduvar. Munai means battlefield and Aduvar means he who fights and kills enemies. Munaiaduvar was an exemplary swordsman. He was a mercenary soldier, who risked his life to earn a living and yet devoted all his earnings to feed good food, which was rich with honey, milk, ghee, curds and fruit juice, to the devotees

of Siva and in charity. He took immense pleasure in offering whatever he could, risking all that he was capable of. This service pleased the God and He raised His devotee's soul to the bliss of Sivalokam.

KAZHARCHINGA NAYANAR

'Kazhal' means anklet given for heroism and 'chingam' means lion. This king was a lion among heroes; as a king of the Pallavas he resisted



all incursions of enemies from the North and saved his people from fear, evil and famine. He was a staunch devotee of Siva and Saivism. He went to the temple regularly. One day as he visited the Thyagaraja temple at Tiru-Arur with his wife, he closed his eyes in devotion and stood in front of the Sanctum. As he was lost in prayer, his wife went around the inner circumambulatory and impressed by the divine smell of a flower offered to the Lord and overawed by curiosity she took a



flower and smelt it. Seru Thunai Nayanar, another serious devotee, who was at the scene, felt that this was a sacrilege. Not even considering that she was the queen, he cut off her nose, that was the instrument to this sin. Unable to

bear the pain, in total shock, the queen fell unconscious. When Kazharchingar came to the scene after his prayer, he got to hear from Seruthunaiyar about what happened and he immediately suggested that the hand that picked the Lord's flower without permission for a very selfish pleasure must also be severed. Saying this he cut her hand too while other visitors to the temple stared in shock. The King's fervour became proverbial. He will not withstand any insult to the Saivite principles or its orthodox form of ceremonial worship. The king was blessed by Siva and perhaps the nose and the hand were restored to the penitent queen.

SERUTHUNAI NAYANAR



Seruthunai Nayanar was born at Tanjavur as a Saiva Vellala and lived a pure life dedicated to the Service of God and God lovers. He never would allow any violations to the orthodox way of prayers. He was the one, who did not stop a second to sever the nose of the Queen of Kazhar

Chinga Nayanar, when he thought she had sinned by smelling the flower offered to the Lord. His sincerity and God consciousness won him Divine Grace.

IDANKAZHI NAYANAR

Idankazhi was a famous king of Konadu with his beautiful capital at Kodumpalur. It was this king, who covered the roof of the Chidambaram temple with gold. He also maintained the Thyagaraja temple at Arur for its festivities and regular rituals. One day a saint by name Sadaiyar was brought in front of the king with a charge that he was stealing from the granary of the king. When the king questioned the saint, he was answered that he had vowed to feed the Siva devotees and when they were starving, he could find the stock only in the granary. This opened the eyes of the king. He realised the actual situation in the country and spent the stock in his granary in the service of the devotees, so that the people could worship without the pinch of hunger. Thus he attained the blessings of the Divine.





PUGAZH THUNAI NAYANAR

Pugazh Tunaiyar of Seruviliputhur was a great scholar in Vedas and Agamas. His love for Lord Siva was incomparable. He performed Shivapuja with utmost devotion. Not even starvation could diminish his ardour. Once the rains failed in Seruviliputhur and famine hit the area. Food became scarce and people were dying of starvation. Pugazh Thunaiyar too had to go without food for days on end. But he continued his daily worship undaunted by the famine. He preferred to forego food rather than forego his first love, Shivapuja; everyday he bathed the Lingam with water, adorned it with flowers and chanted the Manthras with all sincerity, even as his body was growing feeble by the day.

One day as he was trying to lift the water pot meant for bathing the Lingam, it slipped from his emaciated hands and fell on the Lingam. Too weak to stand anymore, he too fell down unconscious and went into a deep sleep. God, taking pity on the saint, appeared to him in his dream and said, "Do not worry, my devotee, I have left a coin, "Padikasu", on my altar to help you tide over the famine. You shall find one such coin everyday till better days dawn". When the Nayanar woke up, true to his dream, he found the coin on the altar. Pugazh Tunaiyar continued his worship and also helped other needy devotees till the end of his life and attained salvation. God assumes the role of a parent to those who always believe in Him, by taking care of their needs, both spiritual and physical, in difficult times.



KOTPULI NAYANAR

Kotpuli, the courageous commander-in-chief of the Chola army, was born at Nattiyattangudi. He was known as much for his charity as for his bravery. He spent his entire income in buying paddy for distribution to the temples. He dedicated his worldly possessions to Lord Shiva. He believed that by doing charity in this birth, he would earn the grace of God in the next birth. But his greedy relatives were always in the look out for an opportunity to misappropriate his wealth.

Once Kotpuli led away his army on a prolonged battle; he issued strict instructions to his relatives not to touch the grains meant for the temples and went away to the battlefields. The battle continued for many months and Kotpuli bravely fought the enemy. Unfortunately back home in Nathiyattangudi famine struck and Kotpuli's relatives used up the grains stored for the temples with no thought for the hundreds of others, who were suffering the same fate. They thought they could refill the graneries when the famine ended and before Kotpuli returned. Kotpuli returned victoriously from the battlefield to a warm welcome from his relatives. Pleased with their behaviour, he invited them all to his hall promising rich presents for everyone. But when he realised that the graneries were empty, he was enraged. He pounced on them, roaring like a tiger (puli) and killed them all with his sword saying, "you destroyed what belonged Siva and He destroys you today". God appeared on the scene suddenly in a burst of light and said, "O hero! Your sword has expiated the sins of all these greedy people. They shall all be given salvation. You too come to Sivaloka with me and lead Sivaloka (heaven) with me". Kotpuli Nayanar enjoyed the bliss of heaven at the lotus feet of the Lord.



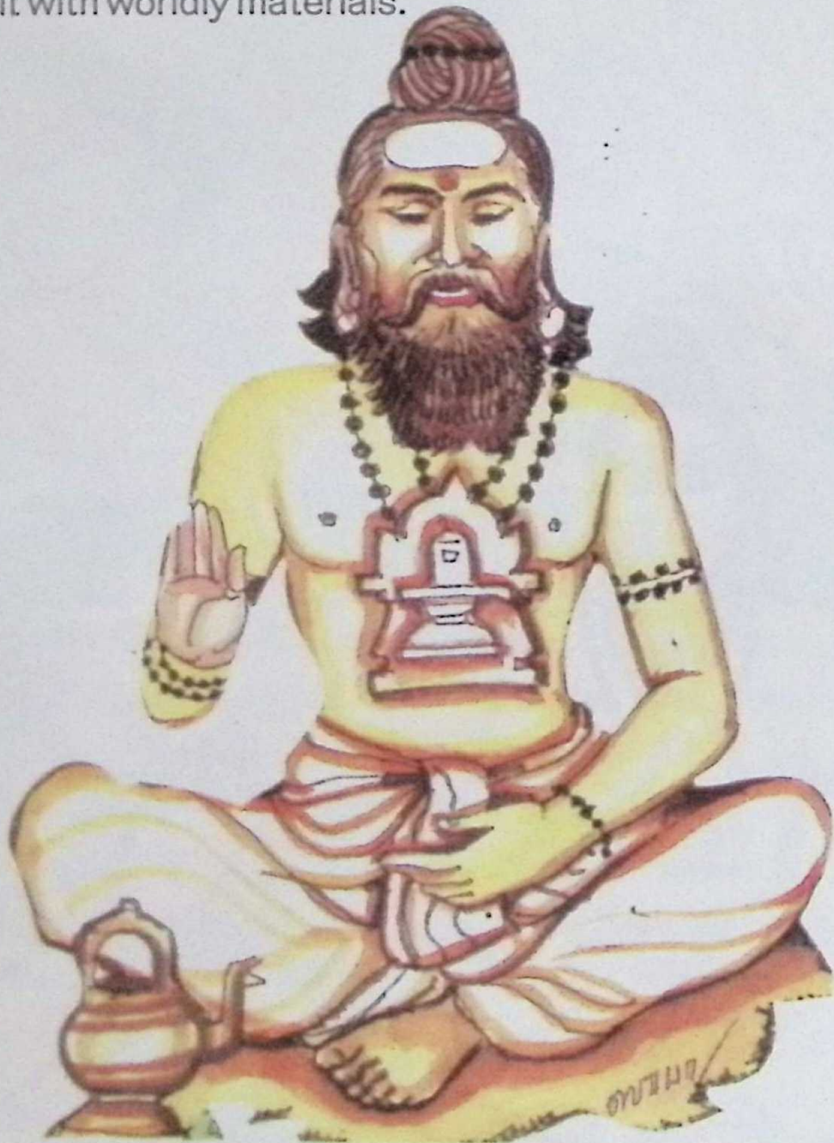
PUSALAR NAYANAR

Pusalar, a poor devout vedic saint, was born in Thirunintravur. He was well versed in arts, devotional songs and Agamas. He was a great devotee of Lord Siva and his mind was always filled with thoughts of Him. Serving the Lord became his vocation. His life's ambition was to build a temple to Lord Siva, the Lord who is bedecked with snakes. But being a poor man himself, it remained a dream and none came forward to help him realise his dream. Lack of wealth or materials did not shake his determination to raise a grand temple. He decided to construct a temple within his heart. He chose an auspicious day and laid the foundation of faith. He raised everything necessary for the temple, like walls, pillars, sanctum, terrace, tower, tank, well, garden, kitchen etc. strictly according to Agama Shastra. It was a temple built by the wealth of love and the strength of faith. Thus Pusalar's dream temple was completed within his heart and he chose an auspicious day to install the "Lingam" (manifestation of Siva in a temple) in the Sanctum Sanctorum.

Meanwhile the Pallava king Kadavarkone was also in the process of constructing a temple with stones for Kailasanathar at Kanchipuram. He too chose the same day for the installation ceremony. As the king was preparing for the auspicious day, God appeared to him in his dream and directed him to postpone the function to a later date as He wished to enter the temple built by saint Pusalar on the said day. The puzzled king found his way to Pusalar's house, fell at his feet and said, "O great saint, where is the magnificent temple that you have built? The Lord appeared to me in my dream and told me that you have chosen today as auspicious day to install him. I



have come to pay my respects to the man whom God has preferred". The bewildered saint replied, "O king, the Three-eyed Lord must have referred to the temple that I have built in my heart. It is not a physical one", and went on to explain the way he constructed the temple in his heart. The king was awestruck at the saint's love and fervour and fell at his feet. Pusalar consecrated Lord Siva in his temple, worshipped Him thus till his last days and attained salvation. The story of Pusalar reveals that God gives preference to the temple built with love over the temple built with worldly materials.



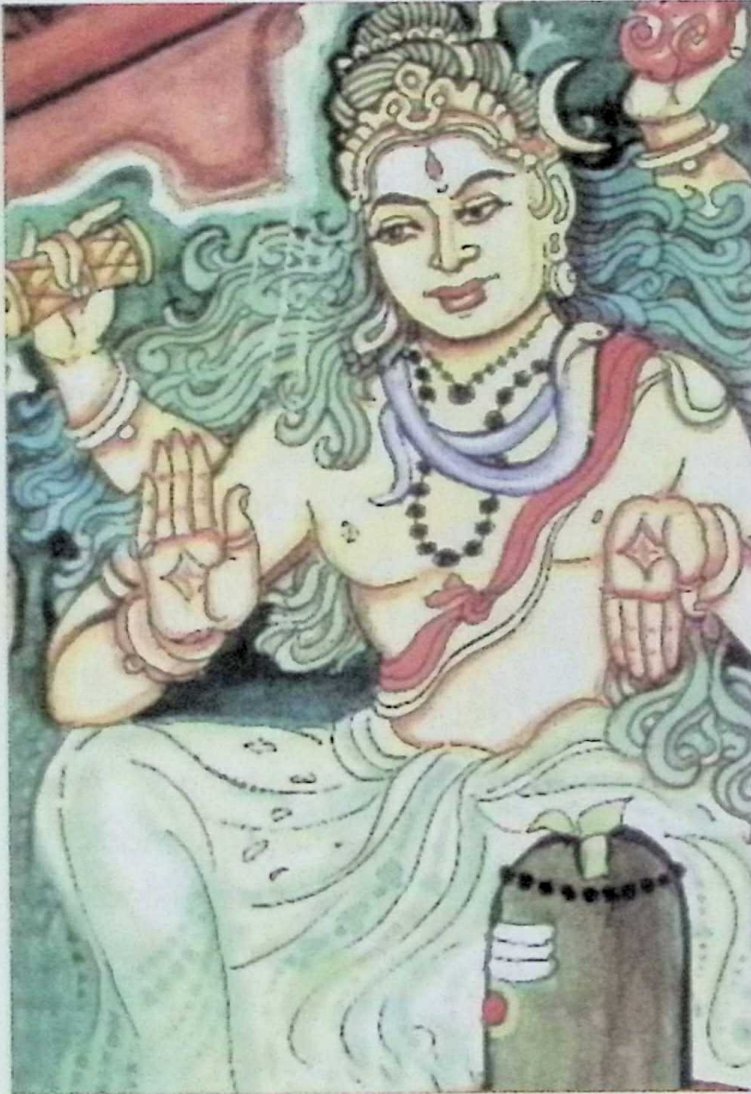
MANGAIYARKARASI



Mangaiyarkarasi was the daughter of a Chola king. She was a paragon of feminine virtues, beautiful as well as religious. She propagated the ideal religion of Saivism and revived the use of Vibhuti(holy ashes). She removed the blot from the Pandiyan race. She even brought the greatest of Nayanars, Gnanasambandar, to Madurai to rekindle the light of Saivism and drive out alien darkness. The queen of

Pandyanadu was given pride of place in so many of Gnanasambandar's songs. The progeny of Chola dynasty, the gracious lady of Madurai, were the various descriptions he gave her. She was helped in her endeavours by the great Pandyan minister Kulachirai, who was a large hearted patron of Saivism. The purity of her devotion helped cure a hunch back called Kun-Pandyan to a straight Nedumaran.

NESA NAYANAR



Kampili was an ancient town of palatial houses and serene beauty. The people of the town valued culture and were very virtuous. In such a town was born Nesa Nayanar, the leading light of the weaving community. He excelled in his vocation. He was also an ardent devotee of Lord Siva and was always immersed in the thought of the three - eyed Lord (Thrinetra). The word "Namashivaya" was always on his lips. Nesa Nayanar was not only a

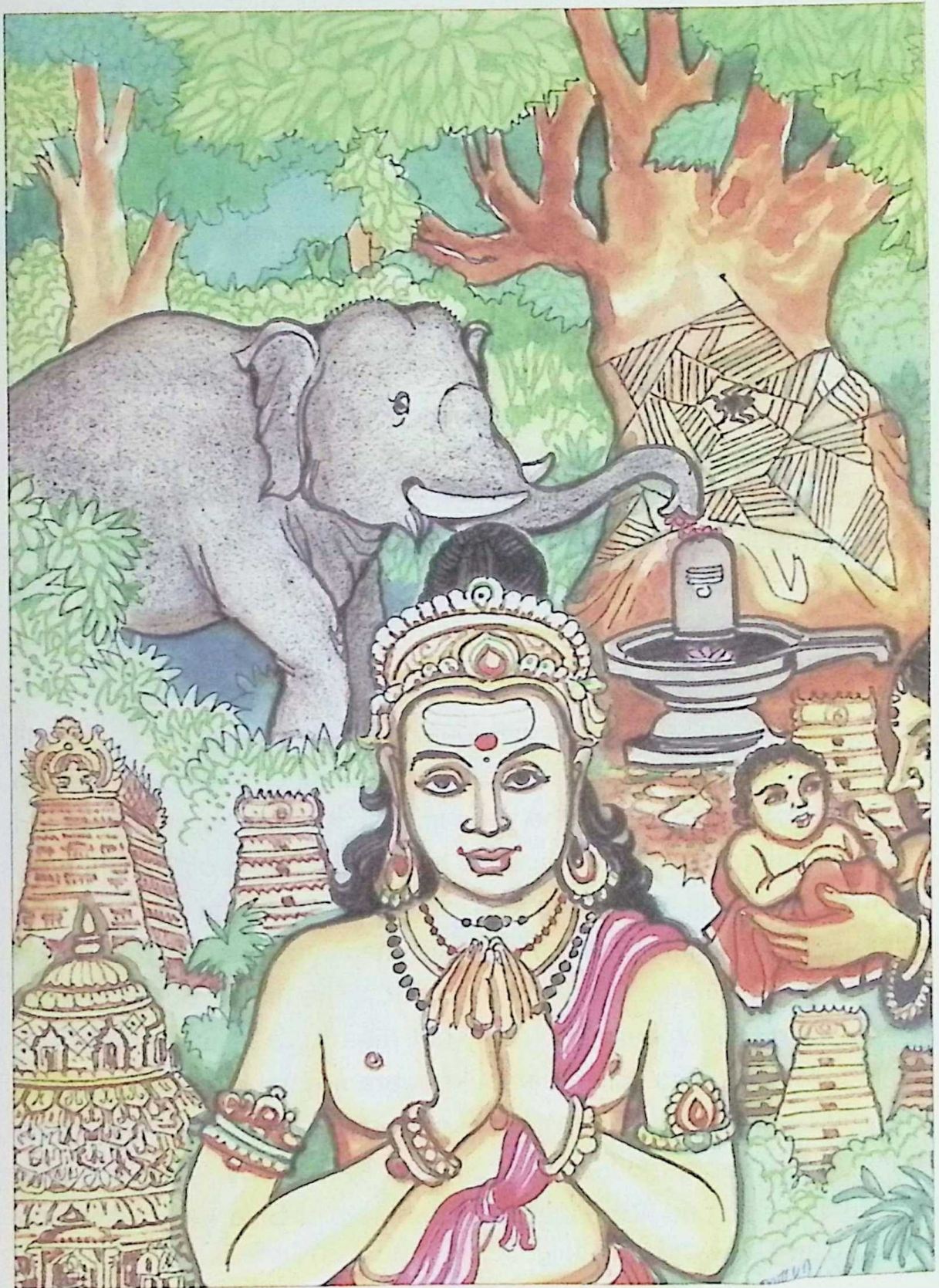
committed devotee of Siva himself, but he also considered himself a servant of each and every devotee of Siva. He used to weave loincloths and towels for distribution to the devotees and deemed it his duty through his entire life. He considered himself at the disposal of Sivabhaktas. Thus by serving other devotees he attained the lotus feet of the Lord.



KOCHENGA CHOLAR

This is an unusual story when compared to the many others as it tells the story of a king who was a spider in his previous birth! There was a beautiful green forest in the land where the Cauvery flowed, which is the present day Tamil Nadu. This forest had a tank in its midst called the Chandra Thirtham. On the banks of this tank was a huge Jamboo (a kind of plum) tree, in which resided several birds. A Siva Lingam was situated under this tree. In the days of yore a white elephant was a devotee of this particular Lingam. It bathed the Lingam with water collected in its trunk from the tank and arranged fragrant flowers on the image in worship. Simultaneously there was a spider too, another ardent devotee, living on the plum tree which adored the Lingam. It worshipped the Lingam in its own special way. In order to prevent the falling leaves of the tree from littering the surroundings of the Lingam, the spider wove a beautiful web above the Lingam. Everyday when the elephant appeared for worship, he would first brush off the web, undoing whatever the spider had laboriously woven the whole day. This incident kept happening repeatedly, until the spider lost its patience.

One day it entered the trunk of the elephant and bit it severely. Unable to bear the pain the elephant cried out loudly, striking its trunk against the ground. In doing so it fell down dead, killing the spider also at the same time. In its next birth, the spider, by the Divine Grace of the Lord, was reborn as the Chola King Suba Deva's only son. The king along with his queen Kamalavati prayed frequently to Lord Nataraja (Siva in His dancing form) at Chidambaram to favour them with a child. The queen became pregnant and when the child was due to be born the state astrologer made a prediction. If the queen could



withhold the baby for one more hour before giving birth, the infant thus born would rule all the three worlds Earth, Heaven and Hell. The queen immediately requested her maids to hold her with her head down for one hour and at the lapse of the given time a baby was born with unusually red eyes. The baby was an incarnation of the spider. The queen was overjoyed. She named the child Kochenganan (red-eyed) and then breathed her last.

The King Suba Deva then reared his child single-handedly with great care. The child was precocious but pious. He was brought up to be a true devotee of Lord Siva. Kochenganan grew up to be both a scholar as well as a hero in martial warfare. At the right age, Suba Deva crowned him as the king and then retired to the forests to do tapasya (meditation). It was a custom in ancient times to begin life as a student, to enjoy life as a man of the family and then to retire to a lonely life in the forests after transferring all responsibilities to their children and end life in meditation.

Kochenganan knew of his previous birth as a spider. He could still recollect that he had caused the death of an elephant, who was also an ardent devotee of Siva. So he went in search of the same forest and found the Lingam under the Jamboo tree on the banks of the Chandra Thirtham. He built a fine temple in remembrance of the elephant and called it Tiru Anaikka Temple ("anai" meaning elephant) Thus he atoned for his sins in killing the elephant. The king brought special priests from Chidambaram to carry out the rituals at the temple. The temple, which is also called Jambukeswaram (jamboo meaning plum tree and Eswar meaning Siva), is one of the famous Siva temples in the region and attracts thousands of pilgrims even today. The king who built this temple and perpetuated the worship of Siva was blessed by the Lord and given Divine Bliss.

NEELAKANTA YAZHPANAR

Nilakanta Yazhpanar was a musician beyond compare. He had the distinction of accompanying the voice of Gnanasambandar. He was

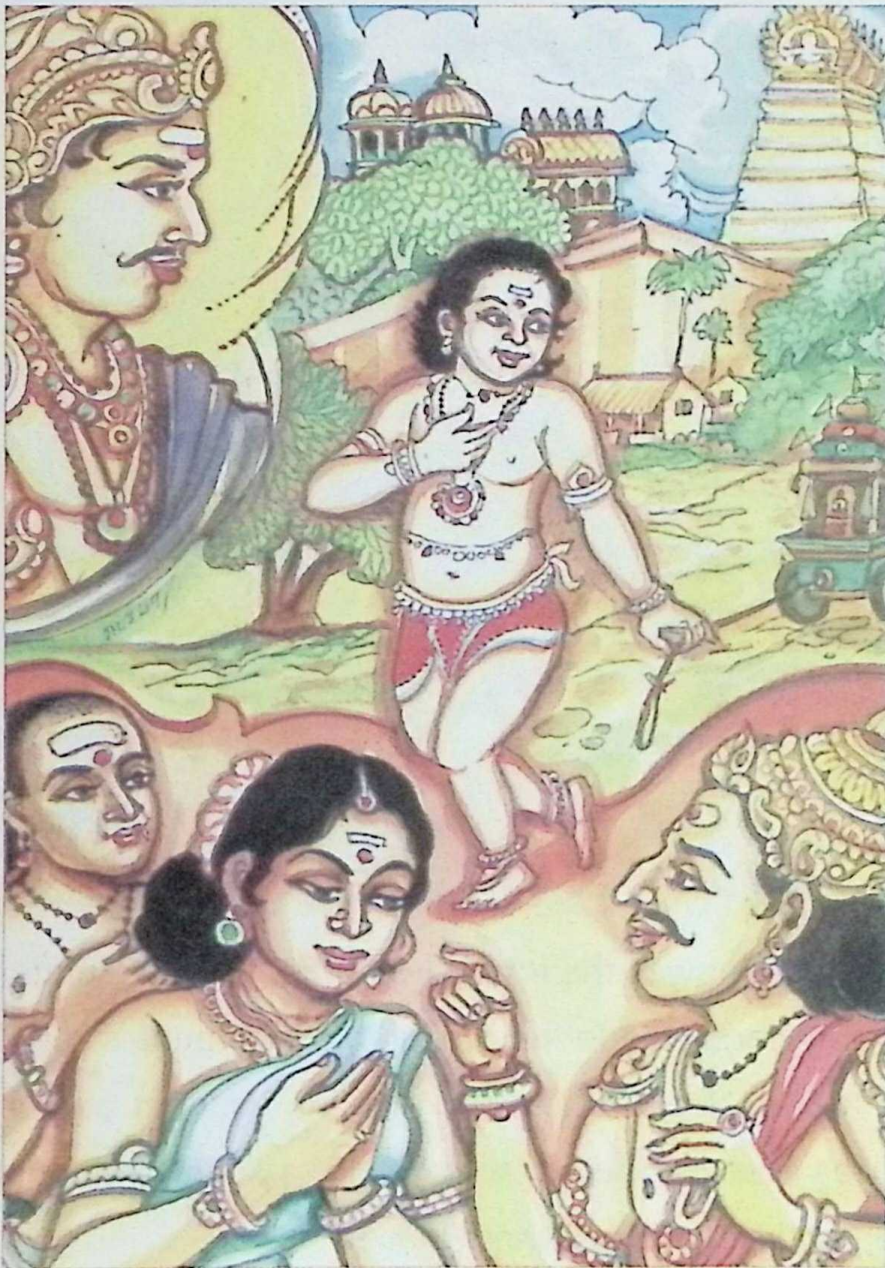


born in a small village with a long name Erukattampuliyur. He learnt to play the Veena from an expert and became a master artist. Despite this he did not commercialize his art and genius. He knew that Lord Siva was once moved by the Veena of Ravana and so he dedicated his skill to Lord Siva. He visited all the holy places within the Chola Kingdom and played his Veena.

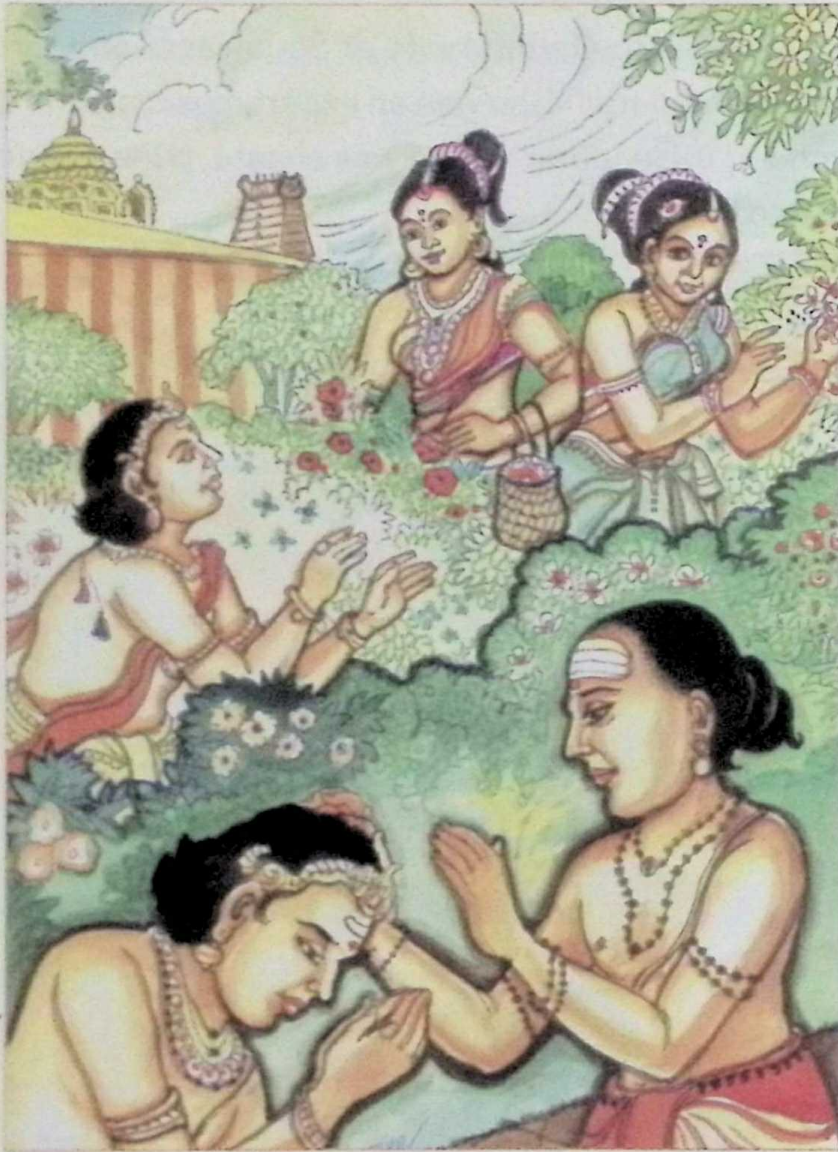
He reached Madurai and perhaps could not enter the temple due to his low caste. But he stood outside and played the Veena and still managed to enter the heart of Siva, who was attracted by his lovely music. Siva spoke to the priests of the temple and asked them to invite Nilakanta to his sanctum. The priests saluted the genius and brought him into the temple with great honour. Nilakanta Yazhpanar then thrilled the audience with his celestial music. Pleased with his music the Lord and Sakthi offered a golden seat for him and his Veena. Nilakanta moved to Arur and the Lord devised a special entrance for him. Then He directed him to go to Sirkazhi and there he became the devoted companion of Gnanasambandar, who was delighted by his friend's skill in playing the Veena. Gnanasambandar's divine voice blended beautifully with the pleasant tones of Nilakanta's Veena. His wife's melodious voice accompanying him added sweetness to the Thevarams. Finally at the wedding ceremonies of Gnanasambandar, he merged into the Divine Splendour at Nallur.

ISAI GNANIYAR

Isai Gnaniyar was the faithful wife of Sadaiyanar and fortunate to be the mother of Sundarar. She was an expert musician and it was her voice that echoed in Sundarar's. She was chaste, pure and devoted to her husband and God.



SADAYA NAYANAR



Sadaya Nayanar was the fortunate father of saint Sundarar. The advent of Sundarar made an epoch in the annals of Saivism. Sadayanar was a Vedic scholar of virtuous conduct and a helping heart. He was a blessed father to have got a son like Sundarar, who was treated by the Lord as a Divine Prince.



STORIES OF 63 SAINTS OF SOUTH INDIA

The Periyapuranam, delineating the lives of the 63 famous Saivite saints of Tamil Nadu, known popularly as the "Arupathumoonru Nayanmar," was written by Sekkizhar, a wise chief minister of the Chola kingdom. Since then these stories have been narrated by countless generations of scholars in the temples of Tamil Nadu, and retold in both Tamil and English.

The devotion of these saints to Lord Siva was all encompassing. They were prepared to sacrifice not only their material wealth but even their lives and those of their families in the service of the Lord and His devotees. The numerous verses composed by the 63 saints in praise of Lord Siva in the various temples of Tamil Nadu have stood the test of time. The life histories of these saints serve as a role model to young people, and speak of the importance of devotion to duty and commitment to society.

The present stories have been retold in simple English for the benefit of young readers in India and abroad by Kalpana Ramani, Asha Kannan and Bhama Chandran, and edited by Lakshmi Venkatraman. Every story is brought to life in the evocative illustrations of Subha. This book is the first in a series of eight volumes envisaged by the Koviloor Adinam Children's Book Trust.

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